

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) successfully amended legislation, passed today by the U.S. House of Representatives, requiring the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to examine the feasibility of contracting with the public and private sectors to make images and video of missions to space more accessible to the public.

“Our nation’s scientific discovery presents a valuable opportunity to engage public and private sectors in advancing NASA’s mission for the 21st century,” **said Arcuri, who successfully offered an amendment to foster NASA’s connection with the local science and technology community**. “Upstate New York is fast becoming a science and technology hub. This amendment is a prime opportunity for NASA to work together with colleges and universities, private research facilities, and small and large high-tech businesses to better educate the public about space.”

Arcuri’s amendment would encourage NASA to directly seek out private research laboratories, growing small businesses in the technology industry, and colleges and universities for its technology needs as they relate to its international exploration initiative. It permits NASA to conduct a feasibility study on the benefits of contracting out these services to non-federal actors. These services may extend to every stage of the project as NASA sees fit, including the initial gathering of data, conversion into readable formats, or actual transmission to the public across the Internet or other media.

Arcuri’s amendment to H.R. 6063, NASA Authorization for Fiscal Year 2009, pertains to the agency’s international exploration initiative. This section of the bill authorizes NASA to develop a technology plan to educate the public and make space missions more accessible to everyday citizens. The bill states that the goal of its initiative is to deliver a multi-media experience to citizens by inviting public and private sectors to participate in this project.

The amendment also promotes good government by requiring NASA to engage in a transparent bidding process when awarding contracts. This measure will promote a fair process that awards only the most qualified innovators.

This amendment has the support of the State University of New York, the New York State Section of the American Physical Society, the American Association of Geographers, and the

Information Technology Association of America.

H.R. 6063 authorizes a total of \$19.2 billion for NASA's programs for FY 2009, and an additional \$1 billion to accelerate development of the crewed vehicles that will replace the Space Shuttle fleet after NASA is scheduled to retire the shuttles in 2010. NASA has a key role to play in the nation's innovation agenda, and the bill authorizes \$4.9 billion for scientific research.

H.R. 6063 contains provisions which would improve funding for aeronautics research and development to make air travel safer and more efficient. The bill increases aeronautics research and development funding, in order to address critical national needs such as the NextGen air traffic control management system. NextGen would ensure safer and more efficient air travel.

It also establishes a role for NASA in leading a cooperative international effort on earth observations research, especially with respect to climate change. It builds on the recommendations of National Academies' Earth Sciences and Applications survey and provides an agenda to learn about the causes and impacts of climate change.

A copy of Arcuri's floor speech in support of H.R.6063 , as prepared for delivery, is attached below:

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)
In the House of Representatives
Amendment to H.R. 6063, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Authorization Act of 2008

M. Chairman, NASA's accomplishments over the years have led to some of the greatest advances in human history. These scientific discoveries have led to everything from prolonging the average lifespan to improving the overall quality of life. NASA's research and exploration has also helped to unlock some of greatest mysteries in the universe. The problem, however, is that too often the American public doesn't have the opportunity to fully experience NASA's accomplishments. It is when these accomplishments are transferred from the federal sector to the private sector and general public that the true benefits of what has been achieved can be realized.

Clearly, we don't have the ability or the financial means to shuttle every American into space, but we can do a better job of bringing the space experience into televisions, computers and classrooms around the world.

The House Science and Technology Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Gordon, Ranking Member Ralph Hall and Mr. Udall, recognize that point. The underlying bill includes language directing the NASA Administrator to develop a technology plan that will allow the general public to experience missions to the Moon, Mars and other destinations in our solar system.

My amendment aims to take this effort and expand it in a way that leverages the existing technology already underway at our universities and high-tech businesses with our national scientific goals and policy initiatives.

Specifically, my amendment tasks NASA to examine the feasibility of entering into contracts with appropriate public, private sector, and international partners to share images and video of space missions, with the public. And the amendment promotes good government by requiring NASA to engage in a transparent bidding process when awarding contracts, as it sees fit.

This is an exciting time in the development of the U.S. space program. We are making real and significant steps towards putting a man on the moon again and exploring areas we have barely touched before. Now, in this new age of innovation, we have a never-before seen chance to make space more accessible to everyday citizens by bringing back new images, records, and key scientific data.

This new chapter in scientific discovery presents a valuable opportunity to engage public and private sectors in advancing NASA's mission for the 21st century. My Upstate New York district is fast becoming a science and technology hub, and I'm sure that many other Congressional districts across the country are similar leaders in cutting-edge science and technology. We have an opening here to work together with colleges and universities, private research facilities, and small and large high-tech businesses to provide NASA with the tools it needs to better educate the public about space.

I would like to highlight that this amendment is intended to provide NASA with an additional resource to meet its goals. This measure would authorize NASA to conduct its own feasibility study to determine if, and how, it can best use the talents of our independent innovators to support its new International Exploration Initiative. This requirement would grant NASA the flexibility it needs to create a plan that best fits the ideals of its new program, while encouraging the agency to look to the advancements being created in our very own communities.

This amendment would also require all NASA contract decisions to be awarded following a fair and transparent bidding process. We would not be doing our innovators justice without leveling the playing field and maintaining an open process.

I respectfully urge all my colleagues to support this amendment and support the contributions that our public and private universities, and businesses make to scientific and technological progress in this country.

Thank you, I reserve the back the balance of my time.

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